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WASHINGTON, DC - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon today voted in favor of legislation to restore accountability and fiscal discipline in the 110th Congress by requiring pay-as-you-go budgeting, reforming the earmark process, and prohibiting deficit spending.

"The people of Louisiana rightly demand that their tax dollars be used in a responsible and effective manner," said Rep. Melancon. "Unfortunately, out-of-control deficit spending and lack of accountability over the past six years has saddled Americans with almost \$9 trillion in debt. That means every child born this year starts off life with a \$28,000 share of the deficit. This must change, and today Congress decided it will change by reinstating fiscally responsible policies such as PAYGO."

Title IV of the Democratic Rules Reform Package (H. Res.6), which passed the House with strong bipartisan support today by a vote of 280-152, requires pay-as-you-go budget discipline, known as "PAYGO," and prohibits deficit spending. In the 1990s, with PAYGO rules on the books, the Federal government saw deficits disappear and rapid economic growth. As a result of PAYGO and a bipartisan budget plan in 1997, there were record budget surpluses both in 1999 and 2000. However the successful PAYGO program was allowed to expire in 2002 by the President and Republican-controlled Congress.

Title IV also requires greater budgeting transparency by ending the abuse of special interest earmarks. This provision requires committees to disclose the sponsors of any earmarks included in appropriations, authorizing measures (such as the highway bill), and tax or trade legislation that benefits 10 or fewer. These new rules will also prohibit trading earmarks for votes and require Members to disclose their earmark requests and certify that they (and their spouses) have no personal financial interest in the request. These provisions comprehensively require committees of jurisdiction and conference committees to publish lists of the earmarks, limited tax benefits, and limited tariff benefits, along with their sponsors, contained in the reported bills, unreported bills, manager's amendments, and conference reports brought to the House floor for consideration. The rule defines an earmark as any Member-requested project that is targeted to a specific place and falls outside a formula-driven or competitive award process.

Finally, the Rules Package will also not allow consideration of any legislation without giving all members of Congress the ability and adequate time to read it first.

"Since coming to Washington two years ago, I have worked with my colleagues in the Blue Dog Coalition to bring greater fiscal discipline, accountability, and transparency to the budget process and end our nation's dangerous addiction to deficit spending," said Rep. Melancon. "I am pleased that in the opening days of the new Congress we brought these principles to the forefront and set responsible for standards for how we plan to operate. As a former small businessman, I strongly believe the federal government must start balancing the budget every year and learn to spend within its means, just like any other business in America."

Rep. Melancon joined new House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (D-MD) and fellow members of the Blue Dog Coalition earlier today in a news conference highlighting these provisions of the rules package, which are all part of the Coalition's 12-Point Reform Plan for Curing Our Nation's Addiction to Deficit Spending.

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